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The American Congress: a History of National Legislation and Political Events, 1774-1895. By JOSEPH WEST MOORE. (New York: Harper and Brothers. 1895. Pp. xii, 581.)

IT is Mr. Moore's purpose, he tells us, "to give, in a concise and popular form, a clear, interesting, and valuable account of the legislative and political affairs of the American people, from the colonial period to the present time." By this he means, of course, to describe only national legislation; with an occasional side glance at local politics in so far only as they are closely related to those of the nation. And he specially informs us that, as the work is intended for the general reader, he has thought proper "to give greater attention to the narration and discussion of events than to their philosophy," although we do not understand why there could not have been a judicious combination of both methods of treatment without lessening the usefulness of the work.

The task Mr. Moore has set himself is a great one, and he has accomplished it, for the most part, in a clear and not uninteresting manner, but of its value we must speak reservedly. There is so much to be said about Congress and its doings, that, if one wishes to confine his narrative to a single volume, however large, he can ill afford to give even a page to the history of the discovery and settlement of North America. Yet Mr. Moore begins at the beginning, and then follows on with a hasty and incomplete review of early colonial, and the Albany and Stamp Act Congresses. Not until he reaches the Continental Congress does the main work really commence, and from that time on he discusses events in a sort of chronological order down to the present day. Some of the chief acts of the Revolutionary Congress are noted, and the pages are here and there enlivened by character sketches of some of the more famous members, by descriptions of the towns and buildings in which they met, and of such events as the appointment of Washington to command of the army, and his resignation at Annapolis. A whole chapter, and rightly, is given to narrating the discussion over the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. But the 3d and 4th of July were by no means entirely given up to the Declaration as Mr. Moore says (page 62), for the British were far too active in the vicinity of New York to permit even the Declaration to draw attention from the inadequacy of the army. And there is no longer any doubt that when Jefferson wrote that the Declaration was signed on the 4th "by every member present, except Mr. Dickinson," his memory played him a trick. Far better would it have been to omit some of the petty details and anecdotes which Mr. Moore includes and give instead some idea of how the Declaration was understood by the people, or explain to a present-day audience the meaning of the counts in the indictment against the king.

Much less satisfactory is the treatment of the debates on the Articles of Confederation. No mention is made of Franklin's draught, and to say that the Articles were discussed from April, 1777, on, "whenever there

were no war measures pending," is a careless form of statement, to say the least. But other omissions are far more serious. We are not told how the members voted; nor anything of their other methods of procedure; nor what they were empowered to do by the conventions or legislatures which sent them; nor how, placed at the head of American affairs, they gradually assumed a control over the military operations of all the colonies, and soon came to exercise an authority that many of them had certainly never dreamed of. We learn nothing from these pages of the assumption of sovereign jurisdiction: of the absolute regulation of foreign affairs, of the disarming of Tories, of the issuance of letters of marque and reprisal, of the opening of the ports to trade, and so on through the list. Mention is made, it is true, of the emission of bills of credit, but not a word is given to its importance as a sovereign act, nor much of a satisfying nature concerning the extensive financial difficulties and disorders. It is thus impossible, from a perusal of these earlier chapters, to trace the steps by which a perfected constitution was, in the end, made necessary.

We have dwelt thus long on that portion of the book devoted to the Continental Congress because it serves as well as any other to illustrate its shortcomings; for the remainder is almost of a piece with this. Much is said of the United States Bank, and of slavery, and the tariff, but they are most inadequately treated, and we find no just conception of their influence in shaping political parties. The best portions of the book are those which deal with what might be called the picturesque side of Congress, and the last chapter, which tells of "present methods."

HERBERT FRIEDENWALD.

Life of General Thomas Pinckney. By his grandson, Rev. CHARLES COTESWORTH PINCKNEY, D.D., President of the South Carolina Historical Society. (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company. 1895. Pp. 237.)

THOMAS PINCKNEY was, unless we except his brother Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, the most distinguished member of a family which has always held a prominent place in South Carolina. He was born in 1750, and his death in 1828 closed a career characterized by ability, discretion, and a high ideal of political duty. He served as an officer in the Revolution, and as a general in the War of 1812. He was governor of South Carolina from 1787 to 1789, and presided over the convention which ratified the Federal Constitution. He was, for four years, American minister to Great Britain, was the Federalist candidate for Vice-President in 1796, and served two terms as a member of Congress. He also performed the important and delicate task of negotiating the treaty of 1795 with Spain. The brief biography by his grandson gives an intelligent account of Mr. Pinckney's public services, and a pleasing picture of his private life. In general, the volume follows the beaten track,—except